

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW OF THE CADET PROGRAM

Scope: During this seminar, students will investigate how cadets perceive their own cadet experience, and what CAP means to them. Second, students will discuss what outcomes the Cadet Program achieves for America and the cadets themselves.

Format: Guided Discussion

Duration: 30 minutes

Objectives:

1. Describe how cadets perceive the Cadet Program and what CAP means to them.
2. Describe the outcomes the Cadet Program achieves for America and the cadets themselves.

Resources: CAPP 52, *Investing in America's Youth*; Powerpoint slides.



STARTING POINT

[Introduce yourself and state the seminar's topic.]



INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

This seminar takes a strategic look at the Cadet Program. By that, I mean we will focus on the outcomes of the cadet program, not on the nuts and bolts of how the program is administered. We'll do this by considering two perspectives. First, we'll imagine what the Cadet Program is like from the vantage point of a cadet. Second, we'll consider what the Cadet Program achieves in the long-term for America and the cadets themselves.

It's important that we begin TLC with these discussions because as leaders of cadets, we need to focus our squadrons, fellow senior members, and cadets on the big picture and the long-term benefits cadets receive from their CAP membership.



MAIN POINT #1: CADETS' PERSPECTIVES

[Guided Discussion]

Take a moment and imagine what it is like to be a cadet. What does the Cadet Program mean to you if you are 14 years old? As a young person, what do you think you are getting out of your cadet experience?

[Divide the whiteboard into two columns. Label one column, "Cadets' Perspectives." Within this column list the students' responses to the question above. The second column will be used when you discuss Main Point #2.]

Anticipated Responses: Wearing the uniform; flying; contributing to life-saving missions; being in charge & learning to lead; interacting with Air Force people; making new friends; working toward an Academy appointment or military career; being unique by joining a group that is unlike sports teams or clubs; being a cadet, not a kid. *[Emphasize that cadets take their program seriously, and that they want their squadron to offer a regimented, disciplined environment.]*

TRANSITION: We've discussed what cadets think being a cadet is all about. But, now let's take a different perspective and consider the Cadet Program from our vantage point as adults.



MAIN POINT #2: LONG-TERM OUTCOMES OF BEING A CADET

[Guided Discussion]

Now imagine yourself as a cadet's parent, their school principal, the mayor, or even the President. From that perspective, what do you believe the long-term benefits and outcomes of the Cadet Program are? What does the Cadet Program do for the cadets, their community and America?

[Label the second column on your whiteboard, "Long-Term Outcomes." List the students' responses to the question above in this column.]

Anticipated Responses: Develop leadership skills; develop responsible citizens; develop character; inspire a love of aviation & space; introduce youth to aerospace careers; motivate youth for academic success; produce tomorrow's aerospace professionals; promote fitness and healthy lifestyles.



[Refer students to the "Investing in America's Youth" pamphlet. Read aloud some of the "outcomes" sections and quotes. Make connections between that text and the students' responses.]

[Follow-Up Questions]

Are these two columns identical? Similar? Different? How?

Anticipated Responses: Cadets focus on the immediate benefits of the Cadet Program. Adults see how the Cadet Program will benefit the cadets in 5, 10, and 20 years.

What does the difference between these two columns mean for you as a leader?

Anticipated Responses: Cadets need mentors to help them see the big picture. Cadets may get caught-up in the moment – focusing too much on ribbons, staff assignments, technicalities, etc., -- so it is up to senior members to keep cadets and the unit as a whole focused on the mission.

TRANSITION: Let's summarize our discussion, and see how it will relate to the remainder of our TLC activities.



SUMMARY

From our discussions, we've realized that cadets focus on the immediate benefits of the cadet program. They enjoy gaining new responsibilities and earning awards quickly. That is fine, because by being active in the Cadet Program, they will develop into the responsible adults we want them to become.

As leaders of cadets, our role is to take the long view. We are the adults in the program. It is our responsibility to ensure cadet activities fulfill meaningful objectives that bring cadets one step closer to becoming better citizens and leaders.



REMOTIVATION & CLOSING

As we continue with the rest of the TLC program, and when you return to your home squadron, Cadet Kristin Miller's words should serve as our guide. The Cadet Program means "... pushing myself to be a better person. I never knew how much I could accomplish until I joined CAP."